

TOS 4206

# Kenya Birds



## **Furadan poisoning in Bunyala**

**Also:**

**Concern over White-fronted Bee-eaters**

**Birds of the Air**

**World Birdwatch 2006 Report**

**Birds of the Mathews Range**

Volume 12, Nos. 1 & 2

October 2008



Great Sparrowhawk

Peter Usher





52 Birds of the Air

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# KENYA BIRDING



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# Letter from the Editor

Many of you may be surprised to see this issue of *Kenya Birds* after a long absence. The Bird Committee which jointly publishes *Kenya Birds* (alongside the Ornithology Section of the National Museums of Kenya) has recently been prioritizing and restructuring all its publications. Besides *Kenya Birds*, these include *Scopus* and *Merops*. Add to these, the publication of numerous check-lists including a forthcoming revision of the *Check-list of the Birds of Kenya* and you can see we've not just been watching birds, though we prefer to!

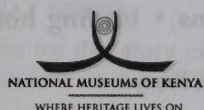
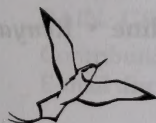
As part of the changes in *Kenya Birds*, I've taken over as Editor from Fleur Ng'weno. Obviously, it will be difficult to follow Fleur in this role given her immense knowledge, not just of birds, but of the whole spectrum of the natural world. Her editorial skills will surely be missed, though I hope to tap into them from time to time. So thanks and appreciation are extended to Fleur for her tireless work as Editor of *Kenya Birds* over the years.

We are also discussing possible changes to the format of *Kenya Birds* and introducing it online as well. As these discussions are ongoing, I won't report on this further until decisions have been finalized.

In this edition you'll find the old and the new. A follow-up report on the most recent World Birdwatch and reports on ringing at Ngulia and waterbird counts. We also report on the continued threat of the pesticide Furadan to Kenya's birdlife.

Finally, I must apologize in advance for my roving between UK and US English. To organise or to organize, favourites or favorites, these are words I am struggling with having grown up writing American English and gradually switching to British English over the past eight years (and my spell-checker won't cooperate either). So please bear with me!

Darcy Ogada



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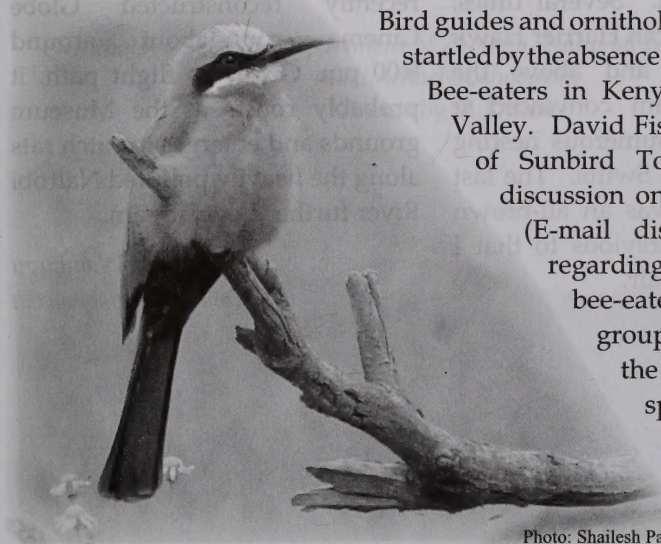
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## Concern over disappearance of White-fronted Bee-eaters in Central Rift Valley

Bird guides and ornithologists have been startled by the absence of White-fronted Bee-eaters in Kenya's Central Rift Valley. David Fisher the Director of Sunbird Tours initiated a discussion on KenyaBirdsNet (E-mail discussion group) regarding the fate of the bee-eaters after his group failed to find the usually common species in the Rift Valley during a recent tour in June-July.

Photo: Shailesh Patel



Traditionally, the bee-eaters are common in the Rift Valley during May-July. In fact, reports from birders indicate that few of the birds can be found in their usual haunts with only 1 or 2 birds seen in areas where in recent years they have been abundant (ex: Hell's Gate). Information from birders in Tanzania suggests there may have been a major exodus of the birds from the Arusha area in mid-May 2008. It is believed that the bee-eaters migrate westwards into the greater Congo Basin. What is concerning ornithologists is whether this is a mass movement of the birds, or indeed a population crash and what is the reason(s) behind it. If you have any further information or have recently seen any White-fronted Bee-eaters please E-mail: [darcyogada@yahoo.com](mailto:darcyogada@yahoo.com).

**\*\*UPDATE\*\* BY THE END OF AUGUST THE BEE-EATERS WERE RETURNING TO NAIVASHA FOLLOWING A RISE IN TEMPERATURES AND A WEEK OF RAIN. GREAT NEWS!**

Contributions for this story came from various individuals who responded to E-mail discussions on KenyaBirdsNet.

*Darcy Ogada*

## Birds of Prey in the City Centre

On occasion I've encountered birds of prey within the Central Business District. Several times, I've seen an African Harrier Hawk flying between and above the skyscrapers. I am convinced it forages on the numerous nesting colonies of Little Swifts. The last sighting I had was an all-brown immature and previous to that I had observed a pair.

I've also observed a Barn Owl, which I saw as it flew above the recently reconstructed Globe Cinema roundabout around 8:00 pm. Given its flight path, it probably roosts at the Museum grounds and emerges to catch rats along the heavily polluted Nairobi River further downstream.

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# Furadan killing birds on a large scale in Bunyala Rice Fields, Western Kenya

Martin Odino, Darcy Ogada & Simon Musila

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Photos by M. Odino



'Killing field' where birds are baited and killed for meat adjacent to rice fields

**F**uradan is a carbamate pesticide intended for use on soil and foliar insects. Though it is legally available in most agro-vet shops in Kenya, it has been banned in the UK while the USA is currently in the process of removing it from the market. Due to its broad-spectrum toxicity, it has been widely misused to kill a wide range of animal species that are deemed a 'nuisance' by farmers and pastoralists. Recent examples of confirmed mortalities due to Furadan include

birds, especially vultures and other raptors, lions, hyenas and hippos. These animal deaths, both deliberate and unintentional as a result of scavenging, are happening both inside and outside of Kenya's protected areas.

In May 2008, we conducted surveys in Western Kenya at the Bunyala rice fields in Busia District. This followed an earlier survey in 2007, which showed rice irrigation schemes to be amongst the main centres of Furadan use,

but which had also turned into prime centres of Furadan abuse by casual labourers. The Bunyala Rice Scheme attracts numerous resident and migratory bird species. Large flocks of birds congregate in the fields during the planting season due to availability of food (rice and invertebrates). The majority of the local human population earn their living by working in the rice fields and some of them double-up as illegal bird hunters.

Our surveys indicated that poisoning of birds happens on a daily basis at numerous sites in and around the rice scheme, though the peak hunting season, where up to 200 birds can be caught at a site in a day, coincides with the planting and harvesting seasons (June and October respectively). Bird hunters were observed soaking grains of rice in Furadan solution and using it as bait to attract wild birds. Crops of dead birds found

in the fields contained rice still covered in husks.

One of the most disturbing scenarios was that the local people are using particular birds as live decoys to attract other species to bait laced with Furadan poison. Bird hunters were observed using the African Open-billed Stork as a live decoy to lure other open-billed storks. The flight feathers of the decoys were removed from one or both wings to prevent them from flying. Their bills are also tied with a cloth to ensure they do not eat the Furadan-laden baits and they are tethered around their leg to prevent them from wandering too far from the bait. Passing storks quickly become aware of the easy meal, in this case, snails laced with Furadan. The decoys themselves were caught after they ingested Furadan-laced snails and then became disoriented. They were then resuscitated using large



African Open-billed Stork with primaries removed. This bird will be tethered and used to lure other birds to the bait.



quantities of water to prevent them from dying. One of the local bird hunters confirmed that water was very effective in resuscitating birds disoriented by the chemical. The birds were then kept in captivity for the purpose of luring their conspecific colleagues.

Bird hunters collect *Bulinus* snails and use a thin stick to force the snail against its shell and Furadan granules are inserted into the space that is created in the shell cavity. The hunters select areas with large congregations of birds to layout the bait for the snail-eating storks. Other Furadan-laced non-stork food, usually rice, may also be scattered just in case other curious birds fly in to join the storks. The calls made by the tethered storks attract a lot of storks and other bird species. The trappers then take cover and wait for birds to fly in and get intoxicated. Incoming birds find food in large quantities and start feeding. In a matter of a few minutes, the graceful storks and other species get disoriented and lose coordination, while their flight is totally impaired. The bird hunters then emerge from their hiding spots with sticks and batter the still seemingly strong birds (usually the bigger species and more so, the open-billed storks) while the dead are collected and

put in basins and sacks and taken to individual homes for sale while still fresh. The remainder are smoked and taken to the local market for sale where they are in high demand. Fresh kills also get



Wattled Starling killed after eating rice soaked in a Furadan solution

to the market, especially when baiting is done to target the weekly market day. The local people claimed that if the crop and stomach are removed prior to cooking there is no harm in eating the meat.

Bird hunting around the Bunyala Rice Scheme has been ongoing for a long time. The irrigation scheme started in the early 1960's, although its operations stalled during 1999-2000 following the depletion of revolving management funds. The scheme resumed operations

in October 2004. In Bunyala, local people testified that bird poisoning has been happening for much of the duration that Furadan has been available and the poisoning has become common place, judging from the broad age range of hunters, from youngsters in their early teens to old men in their 70's. One of the hunters quantified daily catches from any particular trapping site to range from 25 to 200 individuals of mixed bird species. Many species, which were very common and abundant in 1990's, such as the Wattled Starling and the White-faced Whistling Duck have declined noticeably.

We observed that poverty is intense and widespread around the rice scheme. Local people we talked to said that 200 grams of Furadan (cost 100 Ksh) could last one year and provide bird meat on a daily basis. Thus, Furadan is a cheap and very effective (according to local people) means to acquire meat for the local population. The high demand for illegal bird meat combined with a lack of law enforcement is contributing to an ecological crisis in Bunyala (and beyond), not to mention the likely ill-effects on human health of eating birds killed by Furadan.

To read more about the threat of Furadan to Kenya's wildlife visit Wildlife Direct at <http://stopwildlife poisoning.wildlifedirect.org/> Please report any suspected incidents of poisoning to Martin Odino at Wildlife Direct, [martin@wildlifedirect.org](mailto:martin@wildlifedirect.org)

**Dead birds observed or collected during our survey included:**

- 1 Speckled Pigeon
- 9 Fan-tailed Widowbirds
- 1 Laughing Dove
- 6 African Mourning Doves
- 1 White-faced Whistling Duck
- 1 Wattled Starling
- 3 Helmeted Guineafowl
- ~30 Open-billed Storks

**This survey was funded by the Kenya Wildlife Trust ([www.kenyawildlifetrust.org](http://www.kenyawildlifetrust.org)) Initial Furadan surveys (2007) were funded by the Bird Committee of the EANHS through support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Wildlife Direct provided logistical support to M. Odino.**





Vulturine Guineafowl  
By: Edwin Selembo

# Whose Bird ??

Mike Davidson

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**H**ave you ever wondered about the strange names of many of our birds? How about Kittlitz, Hartlaub, Levaillant, Temminck and many others? Well, if you had lived during 18th and 19th centuries and were a scientist, doctor, zoologist, botanist or a naturalist with independent means and a lot of leisure time to travel the world and collect specimens of many species, you had a very good chance of getting a bird named after you! It also helped that you came from the Western World. In total, 331 Britons, 201 Americans, 161 French, 137 Germans, 45 Dutch, 29 Italians amongst others were celebrated with their names on birds. This was the era of exploration and travel, with many explorers bringing back specimens to many museums at home, and of course many were friends of each other.

Let us start with Francois Le Vaillant (1753–1824). He was a French traveller, explorer, collector and naturalist. He was born in Dutch Guiana (now Suriname), the son of the French consul. Birds attracted his interest from an early

age and he spent a lot of his time collecting specimens. As a result he became acquainted with many of Europe's private collectors. He went to the Cape Province of South Africa in 1781 as an employee of the Dutch East India Company. He was probably the first real ornithologist to live in this area. He explored and collected many specimens, eventually publishing a six volume book, *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux d'Afrique*. Many of his specimens went to his financier Jacob Temmink, whose son's name is linked with several birds. We shall talk about him in a later article.

In our area we know:

- 1) Levaillant's Cuckoo



S. Patel

- 2) Levaillant's Cisticola



In other places, there are Levaillant's Barbet, Levaillant's Bush-shrike, Levaillant's green Woodpecker, and Levaillant's Parrot.

He is known to have given the common name to the Bateleur and there are two other birds connected to him:

1) Narina's Trogon—Narina was a beautiful Khoi Khoi girl, who was the mistress of Le Vaillant!

2) Klaas' Cuckoo—Klaas was a Khoi Khoi servant of Le Vaillant, who supposedly found the bird in 1784!

Source: *Whose bird* by Beo Beolens & Michael Watkins

## Spotted Morning Thrush feeding Red-chested Cuckoo chick

During fieldwork at Mpala Research Center, I had an observation of one of Mother Natures' marvels. On two consecutive days, I observed a young Red-chested Cuckoo begging incessantly from an adult Spotted Morning Thrush. In body size, the Cuckoo is three times bigger than the thrush! The thrush went about feeding the hapless and

noisy cuckoo sometimes having to prop itself onto a support just to be at the same height as the cuckoo. It would be a comedy of sorts if by some twist of fate the parasitic cuckoo parents were just somewhere shamelessly observing their seed-of-sin creating havoc.

Bernard Amakobe  
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## Discovery of a Pringle's Puffback nest at Lake Baringo

It all started on one of my trips to Lake Baringo. We decided to go on top of the cliffs to one of my favourite places. It seems to have a different ecosystem. We drove for about 15- 20 km until the track ran out. The main reason for the trip

was actually because one of the local lads said there was a Tawny Eagle with a nest. It was about another 5 km on foot. The eagles' nest was a disappointment, but on our way back along the track I happened to see a nest in an open

Acacia bush about 2 m high. The bird was sitting very high on the nest, so I assumed that it had young. As I was only about 1.5 m from the nest I had excellent views of it with my binoculars. When I observed the adult bird, it appeared to be greyish all over. The beak had a black upper mandible and white lower. The eye was orange to yellow. I set my camera and found to my disappointment that the bird had flown off. Still thinking there were young, I awaited for the birds' return. The bird flew in and out of the bush and I could see that it had a cream front and a whitish rump. I found something to stand on and to my amazement the nest contained three eggs. So the bird was trying to get back to cool the eggs down. I could not get any further away with my camera because of bushes on the other side of the path. The nest

was of a very strange construction. It was on a horizontal branch. I did not pay much attention to the other feature, attachment to a thin, vertical branch, until I returned home and did some research on it. I do not know if it is a feature of all nests of the species. As I have said the nest was of a most unusual construction. It was made entirely of grass stems. The bird must start by arranging these vertically and then weaving in and out until a height of about 6 cm is reached. It looks like a wicker basket. On looking at the photograph I can see that the vertical stems are turned in and used in the lining. The cup was made of the same grass stems and about 1.5 cm deep. Hence, the bird sits very high. The external nest diameter was about 7.5 cm and internally 7 cm. It was very thin walled. It was not until I read more that I realised only one other

nest of Pringle's Puffback had been found way back in 1939.

*Jeffory Coburn, U.K.  
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Pringle's Puffback nest as photographed by the author.





# New Bird Records from the Mathews Range Forest, Samburu District

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The Mathews Range forest, in northern Kenya, is one of the least-known places in our country in terms of ornithological exploration. As part of our effort to improve the knowledge of forest birds of northern Kenya, we visited the Mathews Range twice, during July 4 - 31, 2005 and from July 13 to August 20, 2006. This article lists the new bird distribution records that we gathered during our survey.

A safari from Nairobi to Kitich Camp in the Mathews Range can take you a day if you use the Nairobi - Isiolo route, but despite the short distance, when you get there, you feel like being in another world. No asphalt roads, no communications, no shop, the nearest town being Wamba, more than 50 km to the south. In the forest, there are few signs of human presence, only elephants, buffaloes and lions abound. At Kitich, a tented camp owned by

the hospitable and welcoming Giulio Bertolli, we were helped to choose six competent local Samburu guides that are essential if one is to survive the vagaries of the bush.

In the hilly, scenic and tranquil forest, we set up our camp and proceeded to have a near hermitic lifestyle for more than a month collecting data on plants, insects and birds. We had a river all to ourselves with (relatively) clean water boasting of a biodiversity of life. If ever one has bathed in the river, then you can understand the re-invigoration you get after each bath.

Kitich, in the central section of the Mathews range, is a homogenous dry forest, with a closed canopy, 20-40 m tall. There are several open glades created by animals —elephants— and of course the local human community. The local Samburu herders can fell trees to

## Project Reports

harvest honey, or during droughts to feed their animals on the leaves, but no commercial logging has been documented. This forest is an important ecosystem for the whole of northern Kenya because it is one of the few wet sites in this otherwise dry region. Kitich Valley is actually exceptional, as it possesses a permanent watercourse, with a fringe of little swamps that yielded several interesting bird records.

In 2005, we worked at four sites, located at different altitudes and distances from the forest edge. In 2006, we restricted our activities to the two low-altitude sites, where we established some constant-effort study plots.

Landadapo, at 1850 m, is a glade used by the Samburu for watering their cattle. The forest here is dry and dominated by edge species such as *Olea africana*, *Strychnos henningsi*, *Juniperus procera*, *Croton megalocarpus* and *Diospyros abyssinica*. We worked here for 6 days.

Orokaela, another large glade at 1950 m, is the highest point that we visited and it is about 2 km further to the interior of the forest from Landadapo. The forest here is impressive, with many trees taller than 40 m. Here one finds species such as *Podocarpus falcatus*, *Ficus natalensis*, *Manilkara discolor* and

*Olea capensis*. Human presence is very scarce at this site.

Lorian Lomperai, at 1390 m, is located near a spring that creates a small swamp with reeds and aquatic vegetation. The forest surrounding the swamp is 20-25 m tall, with *Croton megalocarpus*, *Diospyros abyssinica* and *Craibia laurenti* being the commonest canopy trees.

Soit Ng'iro, at 1400 m, is surrounded by low-altitude forest similar to that found at Lomperai, but taller and denser. Our camp here was a few meters from a permanent stream, called Ngeni by the Samburu.

During both years, we divided our time between birdwatching and mist-netting, in order to maximize the diversity of our ornithological observations. Our mist-net efforts ranged between 7-12 nets, which were opened 12 hours between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm.

In 2005, we mist-netted a total of 523 birds of 48 different species. And in 2006 we caught a total of 375 birds of 30 species. The species number and total count of birds is lower for 2006 because in the second year rather than dividing the ringing effort between intact forest and the forest edge, most of the ringing took place in closed canopy forest.





The author ringing a passerine

In both years we obtained very few breeding records, most likely due to the aridity of the climate during our visits. Thus, of the combined total of 898 birds caught during the two years, only 14 individuals of 4 species had a brood patch suggesting breeding condition.

Apart from the mist-netting, our birdwatching sessions produced further records of forest birds, which brought the total number of observed species to 126 for the two years.

The river and the associated small marshes enticed us with sightings and captures of several water-dependent species, among which five kingfishers (Malachite, African Pygmy, Giant, Pied and Grey-headed) as well as a pair of apparently resident African Fish Eagle, and some erratic Green-backed and Black-headed herons.

Another highlight of our mist-netting along the stream was the Little Rush Warbler, a swamp specialist recorded from only a few other Kenyan locations.

We had big successes with forest specialist species, which were the main focus of our study. The Black-fronted Bush-Shrike was a good catch. Flocks of Red-fronted Parrot were observed flying high above the trees in the evening at Orokaela; apparently this species moves extensively across the forest in search of fruiting trees.

An interesting feature of the Mathews Range avifauna is that it comprises some species with mostly coastal distributions, which apparently are resident here, sometimes in good numbers. These include Eastern Nicator, Green-backed Twinspot, and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, which was very common in the low altitude sites.

Altogether, 50 out of 126 species (almost 40% of the total) that we observed had never been reported for the Mathews Range (Atlas square 39C), or had not been observed there after 1970, showing how incomplete our knowledge is of this area of Kenya. Clearly much work remains to be done for us ornithologists in Northern Kenya!

## Project Reports

### New distribution records for the Bird Atlas of Kenya

The following list reports all the new distribution and breeding records that we collected. Following the conventions adopted in the Bird Atlas of Kenya, the codes are: [Pres] for entirely new records in the Atlas square 39C, and [Post pres] for species already reported for that square but not observed there after 1970.

**Black-headed Heron** [Pres]

**African Goshawk** [Pres] One individual mist netted 25/07/2005.

**Great Sparrowhawk** [Pres]

**Verreaux's Eagle** [Pres]

**Ayres's Hawk -Eagle** [Pres]. Scarce and local resident of forest and woodland. We recorded it numerous times in July 2005 along Kitich Valley especially along forest edges

**African Crowned Eagle** [Post pres].

Seen many times soaring over our study sites both 2005 and 2006.

**Hildebrandt's Francolin** [Post pres].

Mostly along forest edges and the Ngeni Stream

**Scaly Francolin** [Pres]. Only in the highest-altitude sites

**Tambourine Dove** [Pres]. Very common at Lorian Lomperai and Soit Ng'iro both of lower altitude. Only two caught in Orokaela, highest elevation point of all our sites.

**Red-fronted Parrot:** [Pres] Small

flocks were observed daily in July 2005 at Orokaela.

**African Wood Owl** [Pres]. This species was heard almost every night at all sites.

**Freckled Nightjar** [Pres]

**Narina Trogon** [Pres]

**Malachite Kingfisher** [Pres]

**Common Scimitarbill** [Pres]

**Crowned Hornbill** [Pres]

**Silvery-cheeked Hornbill** [Pres]

**Moustached Green Tinkerbird** [Pres]

**Eastern Honeybird** [Pres]

**Rock Martin** [Pres]

**Mountain Wagtail** [Pres]

**Yellow-whiskered Greenbul** [Pres]

**Cabanis's Greenbul** [Pres]

**Eastern Nicator** [Pres]

**African Hill Babbler** [Pres]

**Abyssinian Ground Thrush** [Pres]

**African Dusky Flycatcher** [Pres]

**Brown Woodland Warbler** [Pres]

**Little Rush Warbler** [Pres] One individual mist-netted at Lorian Lomperai in a swampy patch at forest edge on 27/07/2005.

**Cinnamon Bracken Warbler** [Pres]

**Mountain Yellow Warbler** [Pres]

**Tawny-flanked Prinia** [Pres]

**Red-faced Crombec** [Pres]

**Yellow White-eye** [Post pres]

**Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher** [Pres]. Mostly a coastal lowland species. This was a commonly caught and observed species but only in the two low altitude study sites of Lorian Lomperai and Soit Ng'iro.

**Brown-crowned Tchagra** [Pres]



**Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike**

[Pres]

**Black-fronted Bush-Shrike** [Pres].

Netted two birds on 08/07/2005 in Landadapo, other individuals observed also at Soit Ng'iro.

**Waller's Starling** [Pres]

**Northern Double-collared**

**Sunbird** [Pres] quite common as 22 were netted in 3 of the 4 study sites, i.e. Londadapo, Orokaela and Soit Ng'iro.

**Yellow-spotted**

**Petronia** [Pres]

**Black-billed**

**Weaver** [Pres]

netted in

Orokaela on

16/07/2005,

also observed

several times

at Soit Ng'iro

**Lesser**

**Masked**

**Weaver**[Pres]

**Abyssinian**

**Crimsonwing**

[Pres]. This species is well represented in all the study sites. Quite commonly netted but rarely seen.

**Green-backed Twinspot** [Pres].

This species was ringed on various occasions in both 2005 and 2006.

**African Firefinch** [Pres] 13

individuals all netted in Lorian Lomperai between 17/07 and

22/07/06.

**Yellow-bellied Waxbill** [Pres]

**African Citril** [Pres]

**Streaky Seedeater** [Pres]

**Thick-billed Canary** [Pres]. Mist-netted in Orokaela, Landadapo and Soit Ng'iro.

**Breeding Records**

**Yellow-whiskered Greenbul.**

Probable breeding records as 10 birds were mist-netted with a brood patch in both 2005 and 2006.

**White-starred Robin.**

Probable

breeding:

two

individuals

caught

with brood

patches

in 2006.

Several

individuals

with juvenile

plumage were

also mist-netted and

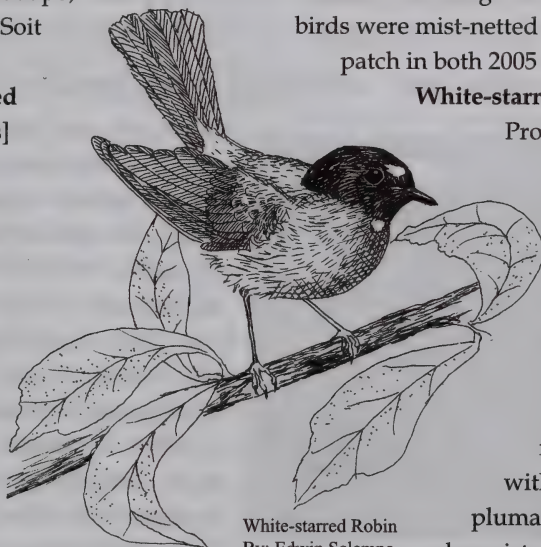
observed in the forest.

**Olive Thrush.** Several

individuals caught with brood patches in 2006.

**Abyssinian Ground Thrush.** Five birds netted with a brood patch in 2006.

**Hartlaub's Turaco.** One dead chick, predated by a sparrowhawk, was collected at Soit Ng'iro in August 2006.



White-starred Robin

By: Edwin Selempo

# Field notes on the Grey-capped Social Weaver Project

Bernard Amakobe

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Members of the Nairobi Ringing Group have been assisting a Cornell University Project in Laikipia by ringing the Grey-capped Social Weaver (GCSW) as a means of conducting behavioral studies on the bird which is a cooperative breeder.

Photo: Natalia Emlen



The birds are colony breeders, which makes ringing easier as we surround a particular tree with nets and are able to catch upwards of 60% of targeted individuals. The project, which has been ongoing for the last six years, is to understand family conflicts and interactions within a social group. The main facilitator and principal investigator is Prof. Steve Emlen of Cornell University, USA.

On top of ringing, we also colour mark all the individuals and take blood samples to verify genetic family links within the groups. This is necessary as within groups there are two types of parents, what we call social parents and the real genetic parents. Social parents are individuals who actually feed the young, while genetic parents are the ones that copulated but then maybe abrogated their duty to someone else.

In terms of behavior, the parents, especially the father will force one-year-old sons to help raise their siblings. Daughters on their part are usually 'married off' outside the colony. But as you might have guessed, the sons offer resistance and woo mates in an attempt to breed. This



angers the father so much that he has no choice but to commit the worst punishment. This is to invoke infanticidal tendencies of throwing out all the eggs of his son, which forces the son to come back and help at the parent's nest.

But you may ask, why not daughters? The GCSW is a monogamous bird and will only take up another mate in cases of death, divorce or where the capacity of one partner to protect and feed the family is put into question. There is no incest in the group set-up, thus the daughters move away from the colony and marry into other family groups or colonies, which are unrelated. But a male can never move off and start his own group, so his survival is dependent on the goodwill of the whole group and his father (in this case the patriarchy) in particular. So, the son must comply with the rules or perish. But the daughter is given concessions in case she is unable to move on. She is allowed to stay so long as she toes the line and helps

in incubating the parent's nest and even feeding her siblings.

The GCSW is a bird besieged by numerous natural calamities. Its predators include snakes, hornbills, hawks and even barbets all of which prefer eggs with the exception of hawks which take chicks. There is also the danger of brood parasitism from Diederik's Cuckoo. Wild animals especially elephants, uproot the trees hosting the nests.

Prof. Steve Emlen has trained numerous upcoming ornithologists in field techniques. We now have a better insight into the use of passive electronic data collection using equipment like transponders and logger units, and image capture using digital video recorders.

It's fascinating that we can learn all this behavior, which mirrors our own, from birds, while we always presume they live an eventless life because of our lack of understanding of the intricate behavior patterns that lie within.

One of the ringing teams (L-R): Juan Carlos, Bernard Amakobe, Mary Nakeny, Maurice Ogoma and John Musina





Bar-tailed Trogon  
By: Edwin Selembo



# Ringling at Ngulia, 2005-2007

Ngulia Bird Migration Project, Ngulia Ringing Group,  
February 2007

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Discovered in 1969 as a unique site for Palaearctic migratory birds. Bird ringing at Ngulia Safari Lodge (Tsavo West) has been undertaken annually for more than 35 years. A dedicated group of ringers from around the world assemble at the lodge in shifts during Nov-Jan. Working both day and night, the birds are caught in fine-mesh nets, gently removed, measured and weighed, fitted with a light aluminum ring on one leg and released to continue their migration.

## The 2005 season

Expectations for autumn 2005 were not high. There was scope for coverage of only one good moon session. Thus was the stage set for the longest sequence of misty nights ever, and at peak migration time too, resulting in a record annual catch of almost 32,000 Palaearctic migrants.

### *Massive fall*

The fall at dawn on Nov 26th

proved to be massive, the largest of the season with tens of thousands of birds in the net area. Over 1500 migrants were taken overall in this day's catch, which featured 81 Iranias, 47 Spotted Flycatchers, 10 Upcher's Warblers, 30 Olive-tree Warblers and 65 shrikes. A small group of ringers usually began operating with two nets between midnight and 02:00. Overall this year, night netting accounted for 28% of the total ringed and it is interesting that this was exactly the same proportion as we achieved in 2004.

### *New daily record*

Monday, 5 December proved a particularly memorable day. The night team was in action by 22:45 (on 4th), and five hours of steady catching yielded a massive total of 1436 birds. Finally, a productive swallow session brought the day's total up to an all-time Lodge record of 3523.

## Ringer's Glossary

**'Control' is a bird ringed somewhere then caught and released by another ringer somewhere else.**

**'Retrap' is a bird caught and released where it was ringed.**

**'Recovery' is a bird found killed or alive by a member of the public (or ringer).**

### Overview

Whitethroat and Sprosser dominated the first part of this spell. But Marsh Warbler emerged as the main species from 29 November onwards, although a couple of daily Sprosser catches – 894 on 30 November and 1335 on 5 December – were exceptional. Irania numbers varied greatly from day to day, but with a noteworthy 202 over 29-30 November. River Warblers were few at first, but picked up strongly during December and more than 300 were ringed over 7th to 8th.

Most shrikes, Spotted Flycatchers and Olive-tree Warblers were caught in November, while Upcher's and Basra Reed Warblers featured in unusually high numbers throughout. Olivaceous Warblers, Barred Warblers and Nightingales were also caught throughout, but the last in modest numbers

compared with the exceptionally high totals of 2004. Willow Warblers were caught steadily, including a high percentage of grey *yakutensis*. On 2 and 6 December, low-feeding swallows were attracted to unusually high

concentrations of small moths in the grass, and over 750 were ringed on both days.

Palaeartic highlights included the first Ortolan Bunting we have ringed, a very lean first winter bird caught in the bush on 28 November; a Eurasian Sparrowhawk and a Eurasian Hobby, both netted on 2 December; two Eurasian Cuckoos, one caught on 7 December on the same day as an Asian Lesser Cuckoo; and a Common Redstart on 8 December. A second new Afro-tropical species, the Red-chested Cuckoo, was added to our ringing list on 4 December.

It was an excellent season for variety. Thirty-nine Palaeartic species were ringed (never bettered and equalled only in 1995), and yet there were some unexpected blanks: no Blackcaps or Pied Wheatears, and only single



Northern and Isabelline Wheatears and Tree Pipit, only seven Common Rock Thrushes, only three Sedge Warblers, and just three Eurasian Nightjars. Few Afro-tropical birds were caught this year.

### *Controls*

It is extraordinary that among so many birds we had only one control this year, and this a Sprosser, ringed three months earlier in the Czech Republic just south of the Polish border.

### **The 2006 season**

In Autumn 2006 Kenya experienced some very wet weather at the end of 2006, and this had unfortunate implications for our season at Ngulia. As has happened before in such years, nights with mist at Ngulia were rather few, and our ringing total was the lowest since 1992, a dramatic contrast with 2005.

### *Overview*

The overall ringing total this year, 8758, was the lowest for 14 years, and less than a third of the record catch of 2005. The one really surprising feature this year was the arrival to taped sound of large numbers of House Martins. Up to 800 were counted at times perched in the *Acacia* trees in front of the lodge, and 380 were eventually caught and ringed between 19th

and 30th, more than three times the total for the previous 35 years. Of the House Martins ringed, 374 were aged as first-winter birds. It was also a good year for Red-backed Shrike with 203 ringed. The 20 Basra Reed Warblers was a poor showing after the hefty 180 in 2005, but this species does fluctuate greatly from year to year. Overall, it has shown a downward trend since the 1970s, suggesting that half to two-thirds of the breeding population might have been lost. Few noteworthy migrants were caught in 2006 but there were five Eurasian Reed and two (both on the same day) Sedge Warblers, a Sand Martin (at night), and no less than six Blackcaps (none in 2005!).

### *Controls and retraps*

A Marsh Warbler ringed in the Czech Republic on 28 July 2006 was controlled at 03:00 on 26 November. Earlier, on 21 November (06:00), there was a retrap from a previous season: an Ngulia Marsh Warbler, ringed (06:00) as an adult bird, on 13 December 2004.

### *Afro-tropicals*

Little of interest was caught this season. The star bird, however, was the male white morph African Paradise Flycatcher caught in the 7 o'clock morning round on 22 November: its tail feathers were a staggering 320 mm long!

### The 2007 season

With more cooperative weather this year it was back to business at Ngulia after the poor showing of 2006. A total of over 17,000 migrants ringed, was therefore most satisfactory. The bulk of this catch was made in early-mid December, and as expected later in the season variety was somewhat limited.

#### *Overview*

The season's Palearctic catch of 17,196 compares well with that of other recent years. The proportion of birds caught at night (37%) was higher than usual. During December, the most notable feature was the abundance of Marsh Warblers. The usual minor species were all represented and the catch of Basra Reed Warblers (85) was encouragingly high. A good trickle of late Nightingales, Olive-tree Warblers and Red-backed Shrikes continued through the second session, but the showing of wheatears and Rock Thrushes was unusually poor.

#### *Afro-tropicals*

The usual variety of Afro-tropical species was caught in the bush nets, and there were some surprises at night. In December, there was a notable influx of Harlequin Quails, with 130 ringed. A

Common Buttonquail was ringed on 3 December. There were few nightjars and only six Afro-tropical species were caught (3 Dusky, 2 Plain, 1 Donaldson-Smith's). An adult male Steel-blue Whydah on 3 December was a new species for the lodge, and a sub-adult Narina Trogon netted at dawn on 17<sup>th</sup> was only the second record. A Singing Bush Lark at night on 9 December was the first lark ringed for many years. The Great Spotted Cuckoo at night after the storm of 11 December was presumably of Afro-tropical origin, as probably were the few Black-and-white Cuckoos, which appeared from 6 December onwards.

### Acknowledgements

We thank the Kenya Wildlife Service for allowing us to ring birds in Tsavo NP and for granting team members free entry (since 2006). At the lodge we thank Mike Ndung'u and since 2006, Silas Kiti and Mohammed Issak Sheikh, and the rest of the staff. The Wetland Trust, Rufford Small Grants and one member of the Ngulia RG provided financial support. The Swedish Ringing Centre allowed us to use their rings and provided support with servicing recoveries particularly from Roland Staav. We are grateful to the EANHS Bird Committee for



funding two Kenyan participants in the main session (2006) and to Wetlands International, Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the National Museums of Kenya for funding three Kenyans in the second session (2006) to take samples to check for poultry flu infection.



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# World Birdwatch Report 2006

Philista Malaki, Shailesh Patel & Chege Kariuki

*Bird watching is with us to stay. By some it is regarded as a mild form of lunacy; by others as a harmless occupation of children, into which maiden aunts sometimes relapse. However, the increasing popularity of this hobby, amongst people from all walks of life, attests to the many pleasures and benefits which can be obtained from it.*

Adapted from *Bird watching in Eilat* by David Yekutieli, 1989

Birdwatching is part science, part sport and part art. It is anything you choose to make of it. People have always enjoyed birds' songs, colours and power of flight. Some birdwatchers spend their time and money in pursuit of rare species yet others are happy to follow the lives and loves of their local birds through a kitchen window. World Bird Festival, which includes birdwatching activities, is among many events organised by BirdLife partners around the world, which bring people closer to birds and nature. Nature Kenya is a member of this global partnership of conservation organisations, which work together to conserve bird species and their habitats, and through this, to protect the world's biological diversity and promote

the sustainable use of natural resources. The idea of uniting birdwatching events around the world into a single event gave rise to BirdLife's first ever World Birdwatch in 1993. Since then, World Birdwatch has been held during one weekend in October every other year. Additionally, BirdLife Partners in Europe have held the European Birdwatch annually. In the Americas, the BirdLife network has carried out bird and nature events annually during the entire month of October and it is called "Festival Mundial de las Aves" (World Bird Festival). In Kenya, World Birdwatch weekend has involved a large number of birders in teams, who fan out across the country in the hopes of counting the most species



over two days. It is exhaustive, competitive and fun. It is also very useful in the collection of data on bird species occurrence and distribution while providing us with a general picture of the status of our birds.

The 2006 World Birdwatch was officially launched at the residence of the British High Commissioner, Mr. Adam Wood, who was also the Guest of Honour. Festival activities, including birdwatching, took place in Kenya throughout the month of November. Registration was open to all and participants were expected to submit their completed checklists after birding during any 24 hr period within the month. The 2006 event was unique since it lasted a whole month, unlike the previous World Birdwatch, which lasted only one weekend.

Birders grouped themselves to target various sites, where they were treated to a great diversity of local birds bursting into song. It was a long birding vacation for many local birding groups and nature guides with varied levels of birding experience. Every participant was eager to know how many of Kenya's 1090 species of birds he or she could observe and identify within 24 hrs. There was

public participation from a number of local conservation groups and organizations including site support groups, bird watching groups and individuals. In total, the 2006 World Birdwatch had over 300 participants from various backgrounds and institutions.

Prizes were awarded to the groups that were able to record the highest percentage of species per Atlas square within any 24 hr period of the birding month. Atlas squares refer to locations used in the Bird Atlas of Kenya, which documents our present knowledge of avifauna distribution. In the Atlas, a map of Kenya is divided into a grid and each cell is referred to as an atlas square. This method places a bird in a region, approximately 27 km long (north-south) and 23 km wide (east-west), as opposed to a specific location and is used because obtaining exact locations for bird sightings is often difficult.

A team from Murungaru, North Kinangop led by Andrew Mwangi managed the highest score after recording 97 species during 9 hrs of birdwatching, or 22% of all the species known to occur in that atlas square. The team, who included Mary Wanjiru, Wachira Kariuki, Samuel Chege and Willy Kimemia, won themselves a trip to Serena

Mountain Lodge. Mike Davidson’s team consisting of Joseph Kariuki, Neema Mbeyu, and Bhavisha and Shailesh Patel birded at Lake Naivasha and emerged second, winning themselves a birding trip to Naro Moru Lodge. The BirdLife team comprising Paul Ndang’ang’a, Maaiké Mantén, Samuel Osinubi and Brenda got an award for the best team report, which was documented as a video. The team visited Olorgesailie and were joined by Anthony Kuria’s team comprising, Mwangi Githiru, Geoffrey Mwangi and Philista Malaki at Lake Magadi and Nguruman. In total, 21 groups registered for the event.

The birding month was a big success we should say! However with a few hitches which are always bound to occur. Some of the checklists were submitted past the deadline hence the delay in providing results of the winning teams and the festival report. Despite this, we received most of the checklists from the participating teams. With the availability of online technology for sending bird records, we also obtained a number of records through Kenya Birdfinder, which was very encouraging. Some interesting observations were also sent through the email listserve, Kenya Birdsnet. All of these

records were then vetted and compiled to produce a checklist of all the species that were observed during the November 2006 World Birdwatch. The final tally stood at an impressive 635 species representing 72 families (the full checklist is available at the Ornithology Section). This was not bad for early summer! Perhaps the number could have been higher if the event was timed to take place during the peak of migration. However, most of the groups admitted that they observed most of their target species. Among birds recorded were Palaearctic and Afro-tropical migrants. Also recorded were rare species, for example, Great Crested Grebe which is regionally threatened. There were also a number of species for which the Records Subcommittee was pleased to receive records for publication. The total species counts for migrant categories were:

Palaearctic	80
Afro-tropical	29
Malagasy	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>110</b>

The number of migrant species recorded was low compared with the more than 240 migrant species known to visit Kenya. Some of the interesting species found by

the avid birdwatchers are shown below. These were highlighted because they were rare, endemic or just uncommon sightings and the species were major targets for most teams who visited the respective locations.

Participants visited 47 different sites. Parts of Northern and North Eastern Kenya were not well covered. During this period, most of the eastern parts of the country were experiencing floods that rendered roads impassable and even those who had planned birding trips in these areas had to cancel at the last minute. There also may have been a lack of resources for teams to cover such

remote areas. Future Birdwatch events should consider mobilizing resources to visit such areas in order to have a more complete picture of the countries' avifauna. Some of these areas are known to harbor interesting species e.g. Malkamari National Park. Among the sites that were visited were a number of IBAs (Important Bird Areas). The information gathered at IBAs forms an important basis for monitoring these sites. Future events should focus on IBAs, especially those with deficient and outdated data. This could also supplement ongoing monitoring work. Areas visited also included important wetlands including:



African Finfoot  
By: Andrew Kamiti



## Reports

Manguo Swamp in Limuru, Thika sewage ponds, etc. where a number of important waterfowl species occur. However, it was not possible to determine how many individuals were observed since count data was not included.

The 2006 World Birdwatch total was not as high as it could have been. There are a couple of possible reasons for this 1) the season was poor for migrants in general and 2) most areas were experiencing torrential rains which rendered roads impassable. Despite the difficult weather conditions, the event received financial and logistical support from a number of generous companies. Among the 2006 World Birdwatch supporters were Safaricom, Serena Hotels, Windsor Golf Hotel and Country

Club and Sarit Centre Getaway 2006. With the success of the 2006 World Birdwatch, it would be in order to acknowledge the enthusiasm and commitment of all the participants and the generosity of the sponsors. In any event involving a lot of people there are always some lapses in organisation and coordination. Each World Birdwatch event is slightly different with new experiences and lessons to be learnt. We welcome any suggestions for improvement of the next event. Suggestions may be sent to the organisers via Nature Kenya P.O. Box 40658, 00100 Nairobi, or E-mail: [office@naturekenya.org](mailto:office@naturekenya.org)



Black-necked Grebes  
By: Edwin Selempo

# Interesting sightings from the 2006 World Birdwatch

Species	Location where sighted
Great Crested Grebe	Lake Naivasha IBA
Black-necked Grebe	Lake Bogoria NR & L. Naivasha IBA
African Darter	Nguuni Nature Sanctuary, Mombasa
Black Heron	Lake Naivasha IBA
Black Stork	Nairobi NP & Lake Naivasha IBA
White-backed Duck	Manguo Swamp, Limuru
Maccoa Duck	Manguo Swamp & Lake Naivasha IBA
Osprey	Mida Creek IBA, Watamu
Bat Hawk	Lake Bogoria National Reserve IBA
Southern Banded Snake Eagle	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest IBA
Booted Eagle	Ngong Forest & Ol Donyo Sabuk NP
Red-necked Falcon	Sabaki River Mouth IBA
Sooty Falcon	Nairobi National Park IBA
White-spotted Flufftail	Kakamega Forest IBA
African Finfoot	Nairobi National Park IBA
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse	Mpala Ranch, Laikipia
Purple-crested Turaco	Ol Donyo Sabuk National Park
Thick-billed Cuckoo	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest IBA
Sokoke Scops Owl	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest IBA
White-faced Scops Owl	Lake Baringo IBA
Horus Swift	Lake Naivasha IBA
Blue-headed Bee-eater	Kakamega Forest IBA
Eastern Green Tinkerbird	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest IBA
Hairy-breasted Barbet	Kakamega Forest IBA
Brown-backed Woodpecker	Langata and Ngong Forest
Brown-backed Scrub-robin	Ngong Forest
White-tailed Crested Flycatcher	Kikuyu Escarpment Forest IBA
Grey-crested Helmet-shrike	Lake Naivasha IBA
Clarke's Weaver	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest IBA

# July 2006 & January 2007 Kenyan Waterfowl Census



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Water bird species are important indicators of wetland health. Species diversity and their abundance are used to determine the quality of wetland habitats and their ability to sustain other aquatic biodiversity. Annual monitoring is used to detect changes in numbers of individuals or condition of sites over time. The water bird monitoring scheme in Kenya was initiated in 1990, as collaborative process amongst National Museums of

Kenya (NMK), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Nature Kenya (NK). However, over time a host of other local conservation organizations, national and international NGOs, as well as individuals have been actively involved and working collectively to sustain the monitoring scheme notwithstanding the enormous financial challenges encountered. The censuses are conducted bi-annually (during January-February and in July).



## Overview July 2006

Six wetlands in Rift Valley region were counted. These were Lakes: Naivasha, Nakuru National Park, Bogoria National Reserve, Baringo, Nakuru Town Sewage Works and Njoro Sewage Ponds where 561,657 waterbirds of 71 species were recorded. The most abundant family groups were flamingos (96%), rails, gallinules & coots (1%) pelicans (<1%) and cormorants & darters (<1%). A number of dead flamingos were recorded in L. Bogoria (7) and L. Nakuru (1245). Some interesting species recorded were: Great Crested Grebe recorded in both L. Nakuru and L. Naivasha, Western Reef Heron in L. Nakuru NP; and Giant Kingfisher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Madagascar Squacco Heron, African Darter, Little Bittern, and Black-crowned Night Heron were recorded in L. Naivasha (Musila, *et al.*, 2006). More than 160 volunteers were involved in these counts.

## Overview Jan-Feb 2007

Thirty sites in five regions were covered. These regions and (sites) were; Rift Valley (10), Lake Victoria (2), North Coast (10), Central (2) and Nairobi (6). More than 300 volunteers recorded 352,459 waterbirds of 132 species across Kenya. The total was significantly lower compared to 1,605,876

individual waterbirds of 118 species recorded in January 2006. Flamingos represented c.70% of the population followed by terns (c.14%) and Palaearctic sandpipers (c.5%). 246 dead Flamingos were recorded only in the Rift Valley region (Musila, *et al.*, 2006). Most of the wetlands showed a marked decline in the numbers of waterbirds recorded, although the number of species remained almost the same compared to January 2006 (Wambugu, *et al.*, 2006).

The numbers of flamingos, recorded only in the North Coast and Rift Valley regions, decreased by 83% from the January 2006 census. At Lake Nakuru National Park, Lesser Flamingos declined by 94% from the previous year. The significant decline in numbers of flamingos from Kenyan Rift Valley lakes could be attributed to possible migration to other lakes in Tanzania or Southern Africa (Simmons & Borello, 1999). Numbers of Greater Flamingo also decreased by 63%. The following interesting species were recorded: in Tana River Delta, African Darter (4), Little Bittern (15), Black Heron (8), Saddle-billed Stork (10), and African Crake (1); Lake Naivasha, Purple Swamphen (1), and White Stork (112); Lake Bogoria, Black Stork (4); Lake Nakuru NP, Green-

backed Heron: Lake Baringo, Collared Pratincole (10) and Lake Magadi, Woolly-necked Stork (14). A summary of results in presented in Table 1, a more detailed report is provided by (Musila, *et al.*, 2006; 2007).

**Table 1: July 2006 and January 2007 waterbird summaries**

	July 2006	Totals for January 2007					
FAMILIES & REGIONS	Rift Valley	Lake Victoria	Nairobi	North Coast	Central Kenya	Rift Valley	Totals
<i>Number of Volunteers</i>	168	12	112	11	33	266	300
No. of Sites	6	2	6	14	2	10	31
<i>Number of Species</i>	71	30	44	86	71	84	132
<i>Number of Waterbirds</i>	567,657	405	1,741	78,518	2,331	269,464	352,459
<i>Flamingos</i>	541,578			2,835		244,493	247,328
<i>Dead Flamingos</i>	1,252					246	246
Grebes	713		38	9	3	131	181
Pelicans	2,654			258		881	1,139
Cormorants & Darters	2,290	19	12	77	8	2184	2,300
Heron & Egrets	1,092	129	123	1,750	103	783	2,888
Storks & Hamerkop	910	57	29	1,652	14	391	2,143
Ibises & Spoonbills	1,237	52	435	25	131	388	1,031
Afro-tropical Ducks & Geese	1,113		408	295	990	1341	3,034
Palaeartic Ducks & Geese		12	19		20	1211	1,262
Birds of Prey	81	3	4	18	20	136	181
Rails, Gallinules & Coots	6,258	3	88	60		224	375
Cranes	23	5	10		96	29	140
Jacanas	118	19		83		107	209
Crab Plovers	87			371			371
Painted Snipes					16	70	86
Stilts & Avocets		25	71	50	18	1607	1,771
Thick-knees				22		6	28
Coursers & Pratincoles						10	10
Afro-tropical <i>Charadriidae</i>	642	9	179	180	48	902	1,318
Palaeartic <i>Calidridinae</i>	15		169	10,738	215	6,755	17,877
Palaeartic <i>Charadriidae</i>	67		1	3,611	1	251	3864
Palaeartic <i>Tringinae</i>		30	90	817	88	655	1680
Other Plovers & Sandpipers				4,150			4150
Gulls	1,442		19	2,231	39	922	3211
Terns	1,031	29	41	49,170		1355	50595
Kingfishers	280	13	5	116	16	150	300

## Recommendations

Waterbird censusing is an important technique for monitoring populations and habitat quality in which resident and migrant species occur. Wetlands in Kenya are under serious threat from lack of proper legal framework to protect them, human activities such as reclamation, infrastructural and agricultural encroachment, pollution and siltation. To address the challenges affecting the continuation of the waterfowl monitoring scheme and loss of wetland habitats and associated biodiversity, the following is recommended.

1. All stakeholders (government and civil society) working for wetlands conservation need to forge closer collaboration to raise funds for waterfowl counts, wetlands habitats conservation initiatives and regular training of volunteers in bird identification and waterfowl counting techniques.
2. Building a network of well-trained local community volunteers at each wetland site in order to reduce the overall cost of sustaining the monitoring scheme.
3. Government agencies (NMK, KWS and National Environment Management Authority) need to institutionalise the counts within their organisations by a financial

commitment within their annual budgets to sustain this important activity.

4. All stakeholders need to educate local communities about the importance of wetlands and mobilise them to actively participate in their conservation.
5. There is a need to ensure enactment of a wetland policy to address the loss of wetland habitats and their associated biodiversity.
6. The enforcement of the existing laws and legislation on water and wetland resources to prevent continuous deterioration of wetland biodiversity.

## References

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### List of Participants in the July 2006 & January 2007 Waterbird Counts

We are especially grateful to all the volunteers for their continued support, time, energy and enthusiasm. The waterfowl monitoring program has virtually been running consistently since its inception in 1990 due to their willingness to participate fully and hopes that this will continue into the future. We greatly apologize in advance for missing and erroneously spelt names.

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Great Cormorant By: Edwin Selembo

## Reports

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Gichunge, Peter Muriithi, Peter Njoroge, Peter Odhiambo, Peter Usher, Philip Chou, Philip Osano, Philista Malaki, Qaisha Shah, Rachel Mwhaki, Raphael Cherono, Raphael Cherop, Raphael Kitema, Rebecca Vande Griend, Reuben Ndolo, Reuben Ngeete, Rodgers Boit, Ronald Mulwa, Rose Warigia, Samson Kuria, Samuel Kangogo, Samuel Muli, Samuel Mungai, Samuel Muraya, Samuel Mwangi, Samuel Osinubi, Samuel Wamae, Samuel Mungai, Sandra Ruecker, Serah Warui, Set Sokol, Shailesh Patel, Shampeki Kambe, Simon Joachim Kiiru, Stephen Amunari, Stephen Mathenge, Stephen Mwangi, Susanna George, Thecla Mutia, Timothy mwini, Tito Imboma, Tonny Wambugu, Toshiaki Suzuki, Veryl Obodi, Victor Maribong, Wachira Gitari, Wambua Musyoki, William Kipkoech, Willy Chepsoi, Wilson Kamande, Wilson Leboo, Wilson Lemegiri and Yuki.



Corn Crane By: Edwin Selempo



# Records

## Compiled by the Records Sub-committee of the EANHS Bird Committee

### Key to records

For new Atlas records, the species number as it appears in the Atlas is placed in brackets after the name: e.g. Whinchat (A#653). The new records themselves are indicated in square brackets. Codes are; pres, present (first record); post pres, present (first post-1970 record). The English names follow the Check-list of the Birds of Kenya, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, EANHS, Nairobi, 1996.

### Overview

This report includes records from World Birdwatch 2003 through 2004. A few records from 1999, 2000 and 2002 are included. Many records are from the Coast; like Shimoni -114C and Sabaki River Mouth - 103A, also Sosian Ranch - 62B and Bobong - 50B in Laikipia. An Atlas square is divided into quarter squares and given the letters A, B, C and D. For example Nairobi falls in Atlas square 75 and in quarter square 75B.

A lot of new information for the Atlas has come in from areas rarely visited by birders, most notably Eburu Forest near Naivasha - **Black-billed Weaver** and Department of Ornithology staff doing research at Mkogodo Forest - **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon**

and **Red-capped Robin-Chat**.

But new birds also continue to be found in well-watched squares such as Nairobi- **Pel's Fishing Owl** and **Lesser Jacana**. In Lake Elmentaita -the southern-most record of **Chestnut-banded Plover** during the Waterbird Counts.

### Acknowledgments

The Records Sub-committee members are Itai Shanni, Shailesh K. Patel, Colin Jackson and John Musina. We would like to thank the Ornithology Section, National Museums of Kenya, for their help and support.

### WORLD BIRD WATCH 2003 PALAEARCTIC MIGRANTS:

**Isabelline Wheatear (A#638):** [Pres 36D] Kanyarkwat and Tartar, north of Kitale, 5/12/03, RJB, NS, MSi, GM

### AFROTROPICAL RECORDS:

**Great White Pelican (A#16):** [Pres 63A] Mountain Forest, Burguret Dam, 4-5/10/03, SVCG

**Pink-backed Pelican (A#17):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM

**African Darter (A#23):** [Pres 63A] Mountain Forest, Burguret Dam, 4-5/10/03, SVCG; [Pres50D] Mpala Research Centre, Laikipia, 5/10/2003, WN, FL, ABr, SR, PL, NG, STa

**Green-backed Heron (A#34):** [Pres 62D] Kedong Valley, Mai Mahiu, 4/10/03, IB, JM, JoM

**African Spoonbill (A#57):** [Pres 63A] Mountain Forest, Burguret Dam, 4-5/10/03, SVCG

## Records

**Egyptian Goose (A#64):** [Pres114B] Mombasa, 4-5/10/03, MR, ST, JKo, JNd, JMu, TM, NKO

**Spur-winged Goose (A#65):** [Pres114C] Shimoni, Lunga Lunga, 4/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp

**Hottentot Teal (A#77):** [Pres103A] Lake Chemchem, Malindi, 4-5/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**White-backed Duck (A#84):** [Pres103A] Lake Chemchem, Malindi, 4-5/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**African Marsh Harrier (A#98):** [Pres114C] Shimoni, Lunga Lunga, 4/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp; [Pres 50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**Great Sparrowhawk (A#104):** [Pres 114C] Shimoni, Lunga Lunga, 5/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp

**Martial Eagle (A#123):** [Pres 114C] Shimoni, Lunga Lunga, 5/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp

**Wahlberg's Eagle (A#133):** [Pres 114C] Shimoni, Lunga Lunga, 4/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp

**Greater Kestrel (A#158):** [Pres36D] Kanyarkwat and Tartar, north of Kitale, 5/10/03, RJB, NS, MSi, GM

**Coqui Francolin (A#172):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Red-knobbed Coot (A#197):** [Pres 103A] Lake Chemchem, Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Common Moorhen (A#201):** [Pres 103A] Lake Chemchem, Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM; [Pres 48D] Kakamega Forest, 4-5/10/03, KEEP, KABICOTOA, KWS staff

**Blacksmith Plover (A#217):** [Pres 60B] WCK, Impala Park, Kisumu and

Dunga Beach, 4/10/03, MW, WHa, MMod, AbM, DK, Jam

**Black-faced Sandgrouse (A#319):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**African Mourning Dove (A#329):** [Pres 62D] Kedong Valley, Mai Mahiu, 5/10/03, IB, JaM, JoM; [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/2003, DN, AM, SJ, MM, JKa, TK, RM

**Red-eyed Dove (A#330):** [Pres 50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**Tambourine Dove (A#335):** [Pres 50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**African Orange-bellied Parrot (A#343):** [Pres 114C] Shimoni, Lunga Lunga, 5/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp; [Pres 50B] Marura Swamp, Ewaso Narok River, Rumuruti, 5/10/03, MK, MB

**Brown-headed Parrot (A#345):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Feral Lovebird (A#349):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**Bare-faced Go-away-bird (A#353):** [Pres 75C] Oloibortoto River, Nguruman Escarpment, 5/10/03, FN, MuK, NSoS, DFr, EH

**White-bellied Go-away-bird (A#354):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**African Grass Owl (A#380):** [Pres50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**Verreaux's Eagle (A#387):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**Dusky Nightjar (A#400):** [Pres 76A]

Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**Mottled Spinetail (A#412):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Mottled Swift (A#416):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/03, DN, AM, SJ, MM, JKa, TK, RM

**Lilac-breasted Roller (A#455):** [Pres 48D] Kakamega Forest, 4-5/10/03, KEEP, KABICOTOA, KWS staff

**Abyssinian Scimitarbill (A#463):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**Von der Decken's Hornbill (A#470):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Red-fronted Barbet (A#482):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM

**Red-fronted Tinkerbird (A#493):** [Pres 62D] Kedong Valley, Mai Mahiu, 5/10/03, IB, JaM, Jom

**Scaly-throated Honeyguide (A#503):** [Pres 103A] Lake Chemchem, Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Pallid Honeyguide (A#505):** [Pres 103A] Lake Chemchem, Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Bearded Woodpecker (#520):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**Williams' Lark (A#535):** [Pres 51B] Shaba NR, 6/10/03, SP, CKa, BdB, HG

**Red-capped Lark (A#540):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**Fischer's Sparrow Lark (A#545):** [Pres 63A] Mountain Forest, Burguret Dam, 4-5/10/03, SVCG

**Plain Martin (A#549):** [Pres 114C] Shimoni, Lunga Lunga, 4/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp

**Mosque Swallow (A#557):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM

**Rock Martin (A#560):** [Pres 50B] Marura Swamp, Ewaso Narok River, Rumuruti, 5/10/03, MK, MB

**Scaly Chatterer (A#596):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/03, DN, AM, SJ, MM, JKa, TK, RM

**Brown Babbler (A#602):** [Pres 36D] Kanyarkwat and Tartar, north of Kitale, 5/10/03, RJB, NS, MSi, GM

**Grey Cuckoo-shrike (A#607):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 4/10/03, ZM; [Pres102B] Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, 4-5/10/03, DN, AM, SJ, MM, JKa, TK, RM

**Dark-capped Yellow Warbler (A#702):** [Pres 74A] Ol Chorro Oirouwa Wildlife Trust and Mara Safari Club, 12 km north of Aitong, 5/10/03, DA, MC, DM

**Mountain Yellow Warbler (A#703):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, Greenpark Naivasha, 4-5/10/03, 'Munchpile Team' c/o PH

**African Moustached Warbler (A#709):** [Pres 63A] Mountain Forest, Burguret Dam, 4-5/10/03, SVCG

**Rattling Cisticola (A#727):** [Pres 63A] Mountain Forest, Burguret Dam, 4-5/10/03, SVCG

**Boran Cisticola (A#728):** [Pres 50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**Black-throated Apalis (A#751):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM



**Grey Wren Warbler (A#761):** [Pres 50D] Mpala Research Centre, Laikipia, 4/10/03, WN, FL, ABr, SR, PL, NG, STa

**White-browed Crombec (A#769):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 4/10/03, ZM

**Black-headed Batis (A#798):** [Pres 36D] Kanyarkwat and Tartar, north of Kitale, 5/10/03, RJB, NS, MSi, GM; [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM

**Pygmy Batis (A#800):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM

**White-tailed Crested Flycatcher (A#809):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 4/10/03, ZM

**Rosy-breasted Longclaw (A#827):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/03, DN, AM, SJ, MM, JKa, TK, RM

**Mountain Wagtail (A#833):** [Pres 50B] Marura Swamp, Ewaso Narok River, Rumuruti, 5/10/03, MK, MB

**Pringle's Puffback (A#838):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM

**Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike (A#852):** [Pres 62D] Kedong Valley, Mai Mahiu, 4/10/03, IB, JaM, JoM; [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Doherty's Bush-Shrike (A#856):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, Greenpark Naivasha, 4-5/10/03, 'Munchpile Team' c/o PH

**Somali Fiscal (A#866):** [Pres 50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**Ruppell's Long-tailed Starling**

**(A#881):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

**Superb Starling (A#890):** [Pres 114B] Mombasa, 4-5/10/03, MR, ST, JKo, JNd, JMu, TM, NKO

**Sharpe's Starling (A#897):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 4/10/03, ZM

**Abyssinian White-eye (A#939):** [Pres 63A] Wajee Nature Park, Mukurweini, 4/10/03, EM, JN, NMwa

**Vitelline Masked Weaver (A#954):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 5/10/03, BC, AC, PD, GD

**Chestnut Weaver (A#956):** [Pres 114A] Mrima Hill, Mrima, 5/10/03, SP, BdB, IS, GSp

**Black-billed Weaver (A#964):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, Greenpark Naivasha, 4-5/10/03, 'Munchpile Team' c/o PH

**Red-headed Quelea (A#987):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/03, DN, AM, SJ, MM, JKa, TK, RM

**House Sparrow (A#992):** [Pres 74A] Ol Chorro Oirouwa Wildlife Trust and Mara Safari Club, 12 km north of Aitong, 5/10/03, DA, MC, DM; [Pres 63A] Mountain Forest, Burguret Dam, 4-5/10/03, SVCG; [Pres 50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**Grey-capped Social Weaver (A#1000):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4-5/10/03, DN, AM, SJ, MM, JKa, TK, RM

**White-headed Buffalo Weaver (A#1004):** [Pres 50B] Ol Maisor Ranch, Sosian along Ngare Narok River, 4/10/03, MK, MB

**Peter's Twinspot (A#1013):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA, JACH, DHe, KH, JM

**Crimson-rumped Waxbill (A#1031):** [Pres 103A] Malindi, 4/10/03, CJ, JMwa, JBa, NM

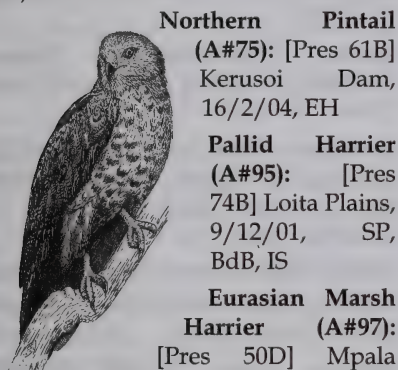
**Black-cheeked Waxbill (A#1035):** [Pres 36D] Kanyarkwat and Tartar, north of Kitale, 5/10/03, RJB, NS, MSi, GM

**Black-&-White Mannikin (A#1042):** [Pres 89A] Kibwezi, Kikumbulyu Location, DWA Estate Ltd, 5/10/03, ALA, EA JACH, DHe, KH, JM

## OTHER RECORDS, 1999-2004

### PALAEARCTIC MIGRANTS:

**Gadwall (A#71):** [Pres 76A] Thika Sewage Treatment Ponds, 24/01/03, BF, IS



**Northern Pintail (A#75):** [Pres 61B] Keresoi Dam, 16/2/04, EH

**Pallid Harrier (A#95):** [Pres 74B] Loita Plains, 9/12/01, SP, BdB, IS

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier (A#97):**

[Pres 50D] Mpala Ranch, Laikipia, 2/4/04, SP; [Pres 74B] Loita Plains, 9/12/01, SP, BdB, IS

**Eurasian Honey Buzzard (dark morph) (A#137):** [Pres 114C] Shimoni Road, 13/4/04, AB, RB, BF, JH

**Barbary Falcon (A#144):** [Pres 2C] A pair, 19 kms out of Lokichokio on the Lodwar Rd, 28/01/04, IS, BC; [Pres 89C] Kilaguni Lodge, Tsavo West NP, 14/6/03, IS

**Ringed Plover (A#227):** [Pres 76A] Thika Sewage Treatment Ponds, 18/1/04, SBW

**Common Redshank (A#259):** [Pres 76A] Thika Sewage Treatment Ponds, 24/01/03, BF, IS

**Slender-billed Gull (A#297):** [Pres 62C] A non-breeding adult, Naivasha Country Club, 14/12/03, BF, IS

**Gull-billed Tern (A#301):** [Pres 114C] Mwazaro Beach, Shimoni, 2-6/02/03, BdB, ED

**Eurasian Nightjar (A#401):** [Pres 63A] Naro Moru side, Mt Kenya, 14-16/03/03, BdB, ED

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (A#447):** [Pres 114C] Mwazaro Beach, Shimoni, 2-6/02/03, BdB, ED

**Greater Short-toed Lark (A#539):** [Pres 62B] Solio road from Naro Moru, 7/12/03, BF

**Black-eared Wheatear (A#641):** [Pres 50D] Mpala Ranch, Laikipia in the red soils, 25/3/03, Tim

**Olive-tree Warbler (A#700):** [Pres 75C] Magadi Road, 11/01/04, IS

**Semi-collared Flycatcher:** Possible female on the edge of the forest, Udo's camp, Kakamega Forest, 03/04/03, SP

**Ortolan Bunting (A#1049):** [Pres 49A] Sergoit Hill and surroundings, 14/1/04, CK; [Pres 51B] Buffalo Springs NR, 6-8/10/04, SP, Tim

### OTHER MIGRANTS:

**Sooty Shearwater (A#):** [Pres 103A] Beach in front of Mwamba, 3/6/04, SV, CJ **NEW FOR KENYA** [\*]

### AFROTROPICAL RECORDS:

**Great Crested Grebe (A#4):** [Pres 38D] in a dam about 2 kms west of Suguta Mugie Springs, North Laikipia, 6/4/04, PF

**Pink-backed Pelican (A#17):** [Pres 114C] Mwazaro Beach, Shimoni, 2-6/02/03, BdB, ED

**Brown Booby (A#20):** [Pres 114B] off Funzi Island, South Coast, 17/12/03, MH

**Dimorphic Egret (A#39):** [Pres 114C] Mwazaro Beach, Shimoni, 2-6/02/03, BdB, ED

**Woolly-necked Stork (A#48):** [Pres 76A] Thika Sewage Treatment Ponds, 19/2/03, SP, BdB, IS

**Marabou Stork (A#50):** [Pres 62C] Lake Naivasha, 16-17/10/04, SP, TIm

**Cape Teal (A#69):** [Pres 103A] Sabaki River Mouth, Malindi, 31/5/03, NbiRG

**Brown Snake Eagle (A#101):** [Pres 74B] Loita Plains, 9/12/01, SP, BdB, IS

**Ovambo Sparrowhawk (A#105):** [Pres 61A] Kilgoris High, 27/5/03, PK

**Mountain Buzzard (A#116):** [Pres 51D] Ngaia Forest, Tower Road, Nyambeni Hills, 9/6/04, BF

**Common Kestrel (A#159):** [Pres 74B] Loita Plains, 9/12/01, SP, BdB, IS

**Buff-spotted Flufftail:** A pair seen at Mountain Lodge, 17/01/04, MO

**Red-knobbed Coot (A#197):** [Pres 103A] Lake Chemchem, 13/11/03, CJ, FA, KdJ, BdB

**Lesser Jacana (A#212):** [Pres 75B] Karen Country Club, Nairobi, 8/9/99, WMBw

**Long-toed Plover (A#215):** [Pres 62A] Lake Nakuru NP, 27/7/03, WBC

**Blacksmith Plover (A#217):** [Pres 103A] Sabaki River Mouth, Malindi, 31/5/03, NbiRG

**Spur-winged Plover (A#218):** [Pres 62B] Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, 3-9/2/04,

RT, SL & students; [Pres 76A] Thika Sewage Treatment Ponds, 18/1/04, SBW

**Chestnut-banded Plover (A#230):** [Pres 62A] Lake Elmenteita, 25/01/03, WBC

**Collared Pratincole (A#282):** [Pres 102B] Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, 16/4/03, NbiRG; [Pres 88C] Amboseli Plains, 7/12/2003, BF

**Feral Pigeon (A#323):** [Pres 75C] Lake Magadi, 21/6/03, NKMT

**Speckled Pigeon (A#324):** [Pres 102B] Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, 30/5/03, DGa, DN

**Olive Pigeon (A#325):** [Pres 114C] Mwazaro Beach, Shimoni, 2-6/02/03, BdB, ED

**Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon (A#326):** [Pres 51C] Mkogodo Forest, Timau, 2-16/6/04, TAd, RMu

**Red-eyed Dove (A#330):** [Pres 50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Dusky Turtle Dove (A#332):** [Pres 102B] Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, 30/5/03, DGa, DN

**African Green Pigeon (A#340):** [Pres 50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Red-fronted Parrot (A#342):** [Pres 51D] Nkunga Sacred lake, Meru, 20/6/03, KD

**Feral Lovebird (A#349):** [Pres 76A] Juja Farm, Kalimoni, 22/11/03, NKMT

**Eastern Grey Plantain Eater (A#352):** [Pres 61A] Kilgoris, 27/5/03, PK

**Levaillant's Cuckoo (A#364):** [Pres 52C] Meru NP, 10/02/03, Sophie



**Barn Owl (A#381):** [Pres 101D] Taita Discovery Center, Rukinga Ranch, 7-8/05/03, BF, IS, BdB

**Pel's Fishing Owl (A#388):** [Pres 75B] Mbagathi River, Nairobi NP, 9/02/03, BF

**African Barred Owlet (A#390):** [Pres 114B] Diani, 16-19/12/04, SP, TIm, JMu

**Pearl-spotted Owlet (A#391):** [Pres 76C] E.A. Portland Cement, Athi River, 20/4/03, NKSB

**Plain Nightjar (A#402):** [Pres 103A] Sabaki River Mouth, Malindi, 31/5/03, NbiRG

**African Palm Swift (A#415):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 6/8/03, DGa, MZ, MK; [Pres 76C] E.A. Portland Cement, Athi River, 20/4/03 NKSB; [Pres 50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Alpine Swift (A#417):** [Pres 63B] Mt Kenya Chogoria Route, 24-25/8/02, JB; [Post pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, 9/5/03, BF, IS, BdB; [Pres 51C] Mt Kenya Safari Club, 18/4/03, JN, EM

**Forbes-Watson Swift (A#420):** [Pres 114C] Baobab Resort Diani Beach, 3/01/04, BdB

**Narina Trogon (A#428):** [Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, 9/5/03, BF, IS, BdB

**Giant Kingfisher (A#430):** [Pres 103A] Sabaki River Mouth, Malindi, 31/5/03, NbiRG

**Violet Wood-hoopoe (A#460):** [Pres 63C] road to Siakago, 1<sup>st</sup> entrance from Embu town, 31/3/03, IS, BF, RB, AB

**Crowned Hornbill (A#474):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 2/8/03, DGa, MZ

**African Grey Hornbill (A#475):** [Pres 62B] Naro Moru River Lodge, 24/11/02, EN, JN

**Spot-flanked Barbet (A#484):** [Pres 62B] Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, 3-9/2/04, RT, SL & students

**White-eared Barbet:** 2 birds seen at Mountain Lodge, 04/07/03, BF, MO, ES

**Red-fronted Tinkerbird (A#493):** [Pres 114C] Mwazaro Beach, Shimoni, 2-6/02/03, BdB, ED

**Pallid Honeyguide (A#505):** [Pres 75B] Mt Suswa, 19/4/04, SBW

**Wahlberg's Honeyguide (A#509):** [Pres 50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB; [Pres 76C] KARI Katumani east of Machakos, 19/4/04, SBW

**Golden-tailed Woodpecker (A#513):** [Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, 9/5/03, BF, IS, BdB

**Fine-banded Woodpecker (A#515):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 5/8/03, DGa, MZ, MK

**Brown-backed Woodpecker (A#523):** [Pres 51D] Ngaia Forest, Tower Road, Nyambeni Hills, 9/6/04, BF

**Flappet Lark (A#529):** [Pres 88C] Amboseli NP, 11-13/7/03, BdB

**Rock Martin (A#560):** [Pres 88C] Amboseli NP, 11-13/7/03, BdB

**African Penduline Tit (A#586):** [Pres 50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit (A#587):** [Pres 88C] Amboseli NP, 11-13/7/03, BdB

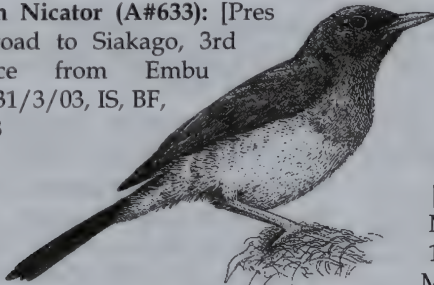
**African Hill Babbler (A#594):** [Pres 51C] Mkogodo Forest, Timau, 2-16/6/04, TAd, RMu

**Arrow-marked Babbler (A#601):** [Pres 50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula

Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Grey Cuckoo-shrike (A#607):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 5/8/03, DGa, MZ, MK

**Eastern Nicator (A#633):** [Pres 63C] road to Siakago, 3rd entrance from Embu town, 31/3/03, IS, BF, RB, AB



Taita Thrush By: Andrew Kamiti

**Red-capped Robin-chat (A#669):** [Pres 51C] Mkogodo Forest, Timau, 2-16/6/04, TAd, RMu

**African Thrush (A#676):** [Pres 62C] Crater Lake, 25/01/03, WBC

**Little Rush Warbler (A#682):** [Pres 103A] Sabaki River Mouth, 30/6/03, BdB, FN, CH, DH, AR; [Pres 88C] Amboseli NP, 11-13/7/03, BdB

**Pectoral-patch Cisticola (A#716):** [Pres 88C] Amboseli NP, 11-13/7/03, BdB

**Wing-snapping Cisticola (A#717):** [Pres50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB; [Pres 51C] Mkogodo Forest, Timau, 2-16/6/04, TAd, RMu

**Zitting Cisticola (A#719):** [Pres 62A] southern side of Lake Solai, 27/6/04, NKO

**Desert Cisticola (A#720):** [Pres 62A] Lake Elmenteita, 25/01/03, WBC

**Ashy Cisticola (A#725):** [Pres50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Boran Cisticola (A#728):** [Pres50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Tabora Cisticola (A#732):** [Pres 74A] Maasai Mara, Sabaringo Valley, 7/12/03, BF

**Singing Cisticola (A#737):** [Pres 51C] Mkogodo Forest, Timau, 2-16/6/04, TAd, RMu

**Hunter's Cisticola (A#738):** [Pres50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Pale Prinia (A#744):** [Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, Umani Springs Camp, Jul - Aug'03, LF

**Buff-bellied Warbler (A#749):** [Pres 76A] Waridi Farm, Athi, 21/3/04, SWB

**Grey Apalis (A#754):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 5/8/03, DGa, MZ, MK

**Chestnut-throated Apalis (A#756):** [Pres 62C] Eburu Forest, 5/8/03, DGa, MZ, MK

**Black-headed Apalis (A#757):** [Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, 9/5/03, BF, IS, BdB

**African Dusky Flycatcher (A#782):** [Pres 88C] Amboseli NP, 11-13/7/03, BdB

**Black-and-White Flycatcher (A#794):** [Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, Umani Springs Camp, July - August'03, LF

**Black-headed Batis (A#798):** [Pres 63C] road to Siakago, 1<sup>st</sup> entrance from Embu town, 31/3/03, IS, BF, RB, AB; [Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, 9/5/03, BF, IS, BdB

**Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher (A#811):** [Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest,

Umani Springs Camp, Jul – Aug'03,  
LF

**Cape Wagtail (A#829):** [Pres 50B]  
Bobong, Ol Maisor, Marula Swamp  
near Rumuruti, 12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI,  
KA, MKh, MB

**Brown-crowned Tchagra (A#840):**  
[Pres 103A] Sabaki River Mouth,  
30/6/03, BdB, FN, CH, DH, AR

**Slate-coloured Boubou (A#850):** [Pres  
63C] Savage Camp, Sagana, 24/5/03,  
NKMT

**Four-coloured Bush Shrike (A#855):**  
[Pres 88B] Kibwezi Forest, 9/5/03, BF,  
IS, BdB

**Long-tailed Fiscal (A#862):** [Pres 62B]  
Naro Moru River Lodge, 24/11/02,  
EN, JN

**White-crested Helmet-shrike (A#870):**  
[Pres 62B] Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, 3-  
9/2/04, RT, SL & students

**Retz's Helmet-shrike (A#872):** [Pres  
51D] Ngaia Forest, Tower Road,  
Nyambeni Hills, 9/6/04, BF

**Ruppell's Long-tailed Starling  
(A#881):** [Pres 50B] Bobong, Ol Maisor,  
Marula Swamp near Rumuruti,  
12/7/04, WJ, EK, TI, KA, MKh, MB

**Abbott's Starling (A#898):** [Pres 63B]  
Mt Kenya Chogoria route, 24-25/8/02,  
JB

**Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird  
(A#928):** [Pres 63B] Mt Kenya Chogoria  
route, 24-25/8/02, JB

**Yellow White-eye (A#937):** [Pres 62B]  
Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, 3-9/2/04, RT,  
SL & students

**Abyssinian White-eye (A#939):** [Pres  
62D] Kedong Valley Farm, 20/6/04,  
SWB

**African Golden Weaver (A#946):** [Pres  
63C] Savage Camp, Sagana, 24/5/03,

NKMT

**Vitelline Masked Weaver (A#954):**  
[Pres 62C] Crayfish Camp, Naivasha,  
28 /4 to 5/5/03, FoO

**Red-headed Weaver (A#969):** [Pres  
75B] Sukari Ranch, 20/8/00, WMBw

**Red-collared Widowbird (A#981):**  
[Pres 61A] Kilgoris, 27/5/03, PK

**Hartlaub's Marsh Widowbird  
(A#983):** [Pres 37A] Keringet Dam,  
Kongelai Escarpment, 16/8/02, JB:  
[Pres 48C] Mungatsi, 20-22/01/03, IS,  
BF

**Red-headed Quelea (A#987):** [Pres  
101B] Voi Safari Lodge, 12/6/04, BM,  
AK

**Cardinal Quelea (A#988):** [Pres 101B]  
Voi Safari Lodge, 12/6/04, BM, AK

**Parasitic Weaver (A#989):** [Pres 103A]  
Sabaki River Mouth, 22/6/03, CJ, MG,  
NM

**House Sparrow (A#992):** [Pres 51B]  
Buffalo Springs NR, 14-16/02/03, SP,  
EB; [Pres 62B] Naro Moru River Lodge,  
23/11/02, EN, JN; [Pres 50D] Mpala  
Research Centre, 14/4/04, SP

**Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver  
(A#999):** [Pres 37A] Keringet Dam,  
Kongelai Escarpment, 16/8/02, JB;  
[Pres 50C] Lake Bogoria Reserve,  
21/01/04, BM

**Peter's Twinspot (A#1013):** [Pres 63C]  
road to Siakago, 1<sup>st</sup> entrance from  
Embu town, 31/3/03, IS, BF, RB, AB

**Crimson-rumped Waxbill (A#1031):**  
[Pres 103A] Sabaki River Mouth,  
22/6/03, CJ, MG, NM

**Fawn-breasted Waxbill (A#1034):**  
[Pres 60C] Ruma NP, Suba District,  
15/6/03, CH

**Zebra Waxbill (A#1039):** [Pres 103A]  
Sabaki River Mouth, 1/6/04, AIB, CJ



**Quail Finch (A#1040):** [Pres 63C]  
Mwea Rice Field, 27/3/04, NKO

**Grey-headed Silverbill (A#1045):**  
[Pres 62B] Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, 3-9/2/04, RT, SL & students

**Cut-throat Finch (A#1046):** [Pres 63C]  
Mwea Rice Field, 27/3/04, NKO

**Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting (A#1047):** [Pres 61A] Kilgoris, 27/5/03, PK

**Yellow-rumped Seedeater (A#1058):**  
[Pres 114C] Mwazaro Beach, Shimoni, 2-6/02/03, BdB, ED

**Northern Grosbeak Canary (A#1060):**  
[Pres 50D] Mpala Research Centre, 22/4/04, SP

**White-bellied Canary (A#1336):** [Pres 62B] Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, 3-9/2/04, RT, SL & students

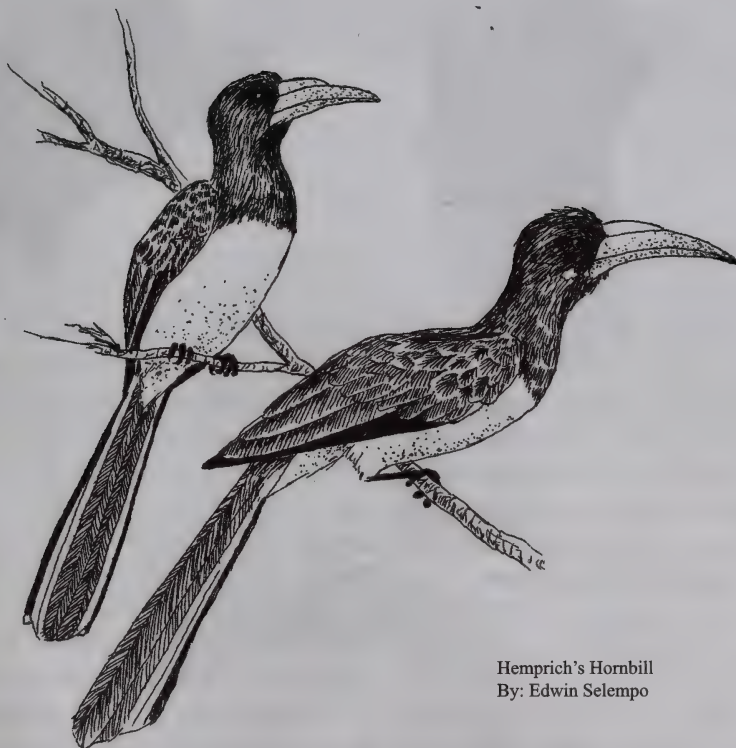
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Conservation Group; TA, Tony Archer; TAd, Titus Adhola; TG, Thomas Guindon; TI, Takashi Iwamoto; Tim, Titus Imboma; TK, Thomas Kazungu; TM, Thomas Mwangi; TS, Terry Steveson; WBC, Waterbird Counts; WJ, Wawire James; WK, Willy Kombe; WKn, Will Knocker; WMa, Wambui Maina; WMBw, Wednesday Morning Birdwalk; WN, Wilson Nderitu; WT, Weaver Team; ZM, Zachary Methu



Hemprich's Hornbill  
By: Edwin Selempo



Birds of the Air

Common Bulbuls



# Birds of the Air



Text and Photos By: Peter Usher

Most casual observers are more likely to see a bird in flight rather than perched. Yet the majority of bird photographs are portraits, hopefully sharp, facing the camera and with a highlight in the bird's eye. Let's be realistic! Birds are very difficult to capture in flight. It requires a high shutter speed or a very fast film, an ability to focus on a moving object whose distance from the lens is constantly changing and a requirement to accurately assess exposure of an object pictured against an often

significantly different background - or worse - a white bird against white clouds. In the past, flying birds presented an almost intractable problem. Cameras were unwieldy when fitted with a long telephoto lens. Birds could not be contained in the viewfinder. Manual focusing was impossible and camera shake inevitable. Hats off then to those experts of former years who produced masterpieces of movement. Did we ever spare a thought as to how much film was wasted before that perfect moment was immortalized?

I am a bird photographer. I specialize in birds in flight. Not because I have the abilities of those former masters, but only because new technology has provided the means to overcome those problems of speed, steadiness, exposure control and an ability to maintain focus on a rapidly moving object. Add to that a computer and software of seemingly magical performance and any of us can become an instant expert. However, this is not for the casual snapper. Good tools still come at a high cost although it is fair to say that, although expensive, they represent good value.

So what do you need to photograph birds in flight? The digital age has changed the way we approach photography. The high cost of film and chemical processing has been replaced by the reusable media card and the darkroom has become obsolete. Cameras however are more expensive and to do the job well, it is necessary to have a top-end model with a high resolution chip coupled to a long telephoto lens of the highest quality. The lens must be light and compact enough to be hand-held, have reliable auto-focus and be electronically image-stabilized so as to ensure the necessary sharpness of the

image. Even the most basic of this type of lens is expensive and top of the range, dedicated lenses can cost thousands of dollars. Of course, technique is still essential and an equivalent "fast filmspeed", in electronic terms, the ISO setting -high shutter speeds measured in thousands of seconds- and an adjustable exposure control, must all be set by the photographer. All you then need is location and a very large slice of luck!

Viewing your images back at your base can often result in disappointment. Most of your pictures will be tiny, out-of-focus silhouettes, fit only to discard. Even the best of them will require the tender, loving care of Photoshop to reveal colours and textures and if necessary replace backgrounds - but that's another story!

### **Accompanying photos:**

**Page 55: Yellow-billed Stork and African Spoonbills**

**Page 56: Long-crested Eagle**

**Page 57: Black-winged Stilts**

**Back cover: Greater Blue-eared Starling**















Greater Blue-eared Starling

Peter Usher



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